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MARKETING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES USING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.

BY

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ABSTRACT:

Social media provides more opportunity for libraries to reach the user community, target specific audiences, and give them a chance to interact with the library. The whole business of library is about connecting people with information and this is what social media is really all about. Social media helps in reaching out to user communities and providing them with needed information in an accessible way. Social media marketing of libraries is a way of advertising the library and its brand products and services via web technologies. By using social media in marketing, libraries can engage with their clienteles and enable them utilize library products and services effectively. Social media includes networking web sites like Facebook, Myspace, microblogging web sites like Twitter and other media like YouTube, wikis, blogs, podcasts, etc. By posting library materials on library page via social media, users can access these resources from various locations on the Web. This research paper gives brief explanation on various key concepts associated with the topic of discussion, the types of social media tools use for marketing are highlighted and discussed, the perceived benefits of marketing library and information resources and services using social media platforms, challenges and strategies to overcome the challenges of marketing library and information resources and services using social media platforms were clearly highlighted and finally, recommendations were provided based on the challenges highlighted in this paper.

Keywords: Marketing, Library, information resources, library services, social media

Introduction:

Information is a necessary resources for national development, produce and develop science is the necessary condition for staying in this present age. The duty of libraries and information centres is to collect, organize and disseminate information resources. The librarians should collect, organize and disseminate information according to the new meaning of marketing. In this way, the users can be satisfied and marketing can present an opportunity for the librarians to do some changes in the physical facilities, resources and services for the users (Ashrafi-rizi & Kazempour, 2012).

Social media has the possibility to help much closer relationships between library and information centres and their customers wherever users are based, and how they choose to learn about and access library resources and services (Islam & Habiba, 2015). They further assert that, in the present time, libraries and information institutions are facing unprecedented change and challenge which has made it very difficult for library professionals to manage and share their resources with others manually. For solving these problems, many technological development has been discovered and creating new forms of information, new sources of information and new ways of providing information bypassing traditional institutions like libraries. Now, the actual challenge for information professionals is not to handle the collection, staff and technology, but to turn these resources into services. According to Amuda and Adeyinka (2017), the concept of services has also changed, from basic to value- added, from personnel-assisted to self-service, from in-house to outreach, from free to priced, from reactive to pro-active, and from mass customisation of individualised service. Libraries have always connected people with information, Social media is beginning to play an important role in marketing of information to library users and in branding the library as a community hub where marketing is a key function of social media (Islam & Habiba, 2015).

In the recent time, Web applications in libraries have acquired growing reputation worldwide, it appears that the library must think about marketing its services more regularly through the internet, taking advantage of Web applications to get better access to its users and to promote library and information resources and services. Social media is a powerful new form of communication (Tofi, Tondo, Ugba & Akaaimo, 2018). These applications have been widely used for information gathering and dissemination, collaborative learning and online social and professional connections. Use of social media is increasing rapidly with numerous benefits for libraries, information centres, librarians and other information professionals across the globe to enhance effective service delivery and to improve the resources and services of the library so

as to serve the users better and in turn get more patronage from the general public. The main purpose of this seminar paper is to discuss marketing of library and information resources and services using social media platforms. Specifically, the paper will discuss the various social media tools that are used in marketing of library and information resources and services, the benefits of marketing library resources and services using social media platforms, the challenges as well as the strategies to overcome the challenges of marketing library and information resources and services using social media platforms.

Conceptual clarification:

Concept of Marketing:

Marketing involves studying target market needs, planning for the suitable goods and services, pricing, effective distribution and relation for information and creating motivation for the market. Kotler as cited in Ochogwu, Ugah, Aba and Uganneya (2016) defined marketing as the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs to bring about voluntary exchanges of value with target markets, for the purpose of achieving organisational objectives. Library and information professionals are involved in the process of marketing because they identify users information needs, acquire and package information to meet these needs (Ochogwu, et al, 2016). According to them marketing concept is based on the principle of an exchange occurring between two parties (i.e. the librarians and users). Marketing is about relationships, about responding to the needs of others. For libraries, this means identifying patrons' needs, communicating how they can help patrons fulfil those needs, and deliver services accordingly.

Concept of Social Media:

Social media are interactive computer technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, careers interest and other forms of expression via virtual communities. Social media have been influenced by the 1840s introduction of the telegraph in the U.S which connected the country. The Plato system was launched in 1960 which was developed at the University of Illinois and subsequently marketed by Control Data Corporation. In 1967, ARPANET first came online and became richly enhanced in the 1970s for exchange of non-government/ business ideas and communication (Stacy & Christopher, 2011).

In 1981, the IBM personal computer was introduced which led to the development of CompuServe, prodigy and AOL which could allow simultaneous users online. This gave more

room for a lot of social media to evolve until in recent time, we have various social media such as LinkedIn which was developed in May 2003, hi5 was developed in June 2003, Myspace was developed in August 2003, Orcus which was developed in January 2004, Facebook which was developed in February 2004, Yahoo which was developed in march 2005, Twitter which was developed in July 2004, Tumblr was developed in July 2006, Google + which was developed in July 2011 etc. (Barbara, 2012).

Library and Information Resources and Services:

Akporhonor and Olise (2015) assert that, librarians using social media may likely promote either library services like lending services, referral services, reference services, technical services, indexing, abstracting, user education etc. or library resources such as books, CD, VCD, journals newspapers, yearbooks, maps, dictionaries, internet- based resources etc. This is because librarians in libraries using social media for professional purposes would in the long-run be letting users know what they offer, what they are doing, what resources and services they offer and what they can offer to their users. Marketable information-based products and services in the library include reference, referral, circulation, interlibrary loan, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), bibliographic information, abstract and indexing, customized research and development, current awareness, readers' advisory, and information literacy services (Edewor, Okite-Amugboro, Osuchukwu, & Egreaajena, 2016).

Social media tools used for effective Marketing of library and information resources and services:

There are so many social media platforms available for libraries to participate in, but it's sometimes difficult to get a handle on how these channels can best be used for marketing library services. Tofi et al (2018) highlight the following as the most frequently use social media platforms for marketing library and information resources and services:

1. **Facebook:** Facebook is a platform that features interactions between users. Facebook users can create a friend list right after membership process and can specify those who can or cannot take part in the interaction (friend selection and limitation of authority) when they sign in. Sharing can be conveyed among friends and enriched with comments. Facebook can be used as tool for promotion of library activities, a closed group of students and faculty members can be formed for announcing upcoming events, new additions by library, blogs by librarian can be shared. Facebook can be used to analyse the services by library or to receive feedback from users as it has the option of

like or dislike or to put a comment. A short video about the services offered by library, guide to new databases subscribed by library can be shared through Facebook.

2. **YouTube:** Libraries can create their own account on YouTube for uploading videos of interesting events taken place in library as a promotional activity. Presentations and demonstrations on subscribed databases, tutorials on usage of sources, videos on book comments will increase curiosity of readers. A video streaming virtual tour of library will catch the attention of readers and indirectly it attracts more users towards library sources and services.

3. **Twitter:** The concept of Twitter relies on messaging service, whether it uses a cell phone, instant messenger, such as Yahoo Messenger or MSN Messenger, or through specific websites. It allows the user to send messages to friends and family quickly and easily. Twitter is also an important social media tool which can be used to promote library activities. It makes library more visible. It helps readers to get information about the dates of book exhibition or even sale of weeded books. It can be used as feedback tool for new databases, books, journals procured by library. It provides direct interaction with users. It can also be used to inform the users about any changes in library timings or extended hours of library.

4. **Pinterest:** Pinterest is an internet menu that provides an opportunity to libraries for marketing and promotion of their services. A library can prepare its own board and pin photos of library, audio-visual clips, and attractive library posters by creating library profile. Libraries can also download attractive posters for display in library which are available freely on Pinterest.

5. **Tumblr:** This customizable social media tool can be used to display information about new services by library, book exhibitions, pictures of posters presented by students at various conferences can be shared using Tumblr. It has a facility of knowing the comments of people who are following the account, therefore it can be equally used as a feedback tool.

6. **Blogs:** A blog can be defined as a user generated website where entries are much in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order. Blogging is an effective mode of communication which can be used by libraries. A library can create a subject specific blog which can give more and more information on research activities carried out in any institute. New research, discoveries in the field of interest of user can be communicated through blogging.

7. **RSS Feed:** Real Simple Syndication (RSS) is the easiest way to keep user updated about activities of the library. RSS feed can be added on the library website, so that instead of

browsing through the entire website user can get the latest information at one click. RSS feed can be created for news / events posted on library website, electronic newsletter created by library, new addition to library catalogue. A library can subscribe to RSS feeds of newspapers and same can be shared through library website.

Perceived Benefits of marketing Library and Information Resources and Services using the social media:

Social media have become a dependable platform for the dissemination of information, forum for feedback mechanism, for research and of course for promotion. It is therefore not surprising that, libraries all over the globe have not failed to embrace social media for promoting and marketing their resources and services. The social media like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Wiki, etc. are useful for the promotion of library resources and services and for the speedy collection of feedbacks from library patrons. Akporhour and Olise cited in Tofi et al (2018) gives the following as benefits of promoting and marketing library and information resources and services using social media platforms:

1. Building Brand Loyalty:

Promoting library and information services with social media helps libraries to not just advocate the library but also brings library users to become library advocates. Social media is a centre for engagement that would enhance two-way communication like never before. This in turn builds the library's image. Using social media in libraries increase reliability on the library thereby building brand loyalty. In this age of social media, libraries have created their own personal brands for years just like how celebrities and media commenters have done. University libraries generally do not have a direct sales function, but they do have a history of building lasting relationships with different stakeholders, including university administration, researchers, instructors and students. Indeed, one of the most important things that a good academic library can offer is a long term relationship with the people who use library resources and services and this could be effectively done using social media tools.

2. Saves Time:

Social media for marketing library and information resources and services save time and library staff hours. Social media have helped libraries in providing quick updates to users and provide a forum for quick and speedy feedback from library patrons. More so, social media make it easier to reach a large number of library patrons in the most time effective manner. Although

there is a wide perception that social media marketing takes a lot of time and energy for it to be worthwhile. The biggest benefit of social media marketing is the simple fact that delivery online content can be the most cost effective and time-effective part of the marketing mix.

3. Enhances fast Two-Way Communication:

One of the most important tenets of customer service is to be responsive to users concerns or praise – Recognize them and show that the library is interested in and care about their opinion. There is no controlling of what is said about a library but librarians can influence the message that comes back. This is where social media come to play as social media create a forum for feedback in library marketing.

4. Saves Costs and Increases Revenue:

Social media technologies cost next to nothing. Using social media for marketing library and information resources and services allows for a vast reach yet having very low cost. In fact, using social media to market library and information resources and services does not cost a single kobo. A library can perform actions/activities on social media like Facebook, blogs, twitter about products and services without investing a dime. All the library needs is a Facebook account, or a Twitter account or Myspace account, etc. The library can have patrons and the community and stakeholders to follow them on Twitter or “like” their Facebook account. Then, promotion and marketing can begin. In yet another vein, marketing libraries through social media increase revenue. Marketing of library resources and services through social media is becoming a necessity if librarians wish to raise revenue from stakeholders and the management of the university.

5. Increases Library Users: The online community is opened to all as long as there is an internet connectivity. In Facebook, for instance, the activities of a friend or user of a library page are known by friends connected to that friend or user. Hence, when a fan of a library page comments or likes a status/post put up by the library, others can come to the knowledge of the promotional and marketing activities carried out in a library. This can motivate a friend of a library fan to join the library. Also, social media can increase library patron’s satisfaction with the library. This is not to say that the services rendered in the library should not be effective otherwise marketing of such services would not attract more library users. Apparently, social media has become the catalyst in projecting library and information resources and services and maintain relationships with users. As librarians are yearning to remain relevant in a digital society, social media can be seen as the tool to help libraries entice and retain their

users through promotion and marketing. Besides, the overall process of promoting and marketing libraries through social media becomes more understanding to both libraries and library users.

Challenges of Marketing of Library and Information Resources and services using Social Media Platforms.

In spite of the benefits derived from the use of social media tools in the marketing of library and information resources and services, they are in existence a lot of challenges hindering marketing of library and information resources and services on social media. To support this, Tofi, Tondo, Ugba and Gbaaikye (2018) revealed electricity failure as the greatest problem in using social media for marketing library and information resources and services. They further revealed that lack of time to use social media, lack of privacy and identity theft, too many social media tools to learn, lack of knowledge on how to use the social media tools, slow speed of internet, inadequate funding for libraries, inadequate and lack of qualified staff and inadequate training opportunities are the major problems in using social media for marketing library and information resources, products and services.

Strategies to overcome the challenges of Marketing of Library and Information Resources and Services using Social Media Platforms.

It is plausible that libraries and librarians behavior towards the use of social media for marketing library and information resources and services is positive and yielding a good result. By using social media platforms, libraries can promote their users, resources, services, events and communication. Libraries should be facilitated with internet services and develop their web page and social media page. In order to grow social media usage trend in libraries, librarians should be trained and educated regarding social media use for promoting the marketing of library and information resources and services and all the problems that hinders social media usage in libraries should be resolved.

Some of the strategies for effectively marketing of library and information resources and services using the social media platforms as highlighted by Tofi et al (2018) includes:

- 1) Provision of standby generator. In case of power failure the generator can be used to power on the computers and other electrical devices for the librarian's to carry out their duties effectively on the social media.

- 2) Provision of adequate funds for subscription of the internet to carry out marketing and promotional activities on social media.
- 3) Employment of qualified and competent librarians with the knowledge of ICT in the libraries.
- 4) Training opportunities should be provided in libraries so that librarians can make use of the opportunity to develop themselves on social media usage.

Conclusion:

This research paper examined marketing library and information resources and services using social media platforms. It is very important that, we realise the value of marketing library resources and services using social media tools like Facebook, twitter, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest etc. the social media is well accepted and recognised in the present day generation as a forum for marketing library and information services and general information dissemination to library users. Most of the libraries use social media for marketing library products and services, for sharing library news and events, video conferencing, advertisement and, research work. However, librarians are encouraged to embrace information and communication Technology (ICT) to be able to meet up with the challenge of dissemination in the present technologically advanced society and also embark on staff training on the use of model technology to be able to serve the information user community via the social media.

Recommendations:

Based on the above mentioned challenges, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Adequate technology and internet facilities should be readily available in libraries and the library management should provide funds for internet subscriptions in libraries.
- ii. ICT policies should be formulated in the libraries and should also provide a section for the use of social media among librarians and even non-professional staff in the library.
- iii. Finance should be adequately and promptly provided by the parent institutions to further enhance the use of social media to promote library and information resources and services.
- iv. Librarians using social media to promote library and information resources and services should be very careful and mindful of what they post on social media

because once a content is shared online, it might be very difficult to take it offline again and it will remain there for everybody to see.

- v. Library schools in their syllabus should emphasize on the practical aspects of marketing and using social media for this purpose.
- vi. Library association, alumnae and LIS schools should play their role in popularizing the use of social media among LIS professionals.

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